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## RE-DISCOVERY OF THE NOISY SCRUB-BIRD, *ATRICHORNIS CLAMOSUS*

By H. O. WEBSTER, Albany.

On December 17, 1961, in an area near Albany where I had been spending a good deal of time observing and photographing birds, my attention was caught by a series of bird calls which were quite new to me. They were fairly long and were also loud and frequent. I had to move over 200 yards and into very dense, high scrub surrounding a small sword or cut-rush covered swamp before I was close to the still calling bird. In spite of the noise I made in my approach it continued to call and I halted to listen about twenty feet from it. The loudness and richness of the calls were remarkable and I began to hope that it was indeed that will-o-the-wisp that has lured ornithologists in the past seventy-odd years into the thick scrubs of the South-West—*Atrichornis clamosus*.<sup>\*</sup> The bird moved off and I followed, unavoidably making enough noise to frighten any other bird away. This bird, however, repeatedly allowed me to get within ten or fifteen feet while it was calling, but I hardly caught a glimpse of it all that day, it was so adept at keeping itself under cover. I came away in the evening with impressions of a brown bird with a call that really made my ears ring and with the knowledge that it was almost certainly the Noisy Scrub-bird.

On the following Saturday morning, December 23, I was in the area soon after daybreak. I found the bird was calling in thick scrub on a sandy slope some distance from the sword-rush swamp. It heard me and a few minutes after I halted it appeared about ten feet away in a rather open bush. I had a reasonably good view of it with the naked eye as it was too close to use binoculars. It was dark brown, about nine inches long with a fairly long tail which had feathers graduated in length. The head and throat were hidden by leaves. It moved to my left and from a distance of ten to twelve feet gave a series of amazingly loud calls. I was by this time sure that it was the Noisy Scrub-bird. During the remainder of that day, I had only brief glimpses as I followed it when I could for the scrub was very difficult to get through. Next morning it was in a fairly extensive swampy flat which was rather more open but still densely covered by rushes, tall grasses, scrub and stunted banksia trees. As previ-

<sup>\*</sup> The last published report of sightings of the species was in 1889, when A. J. Campbell collected a specimen at Torbay and heard the bird at Boogidup, 16 miles north of Karridale.

ously I was able to follow the bird about and had a number of views of it, none of them very clear. At last it ran up from the scrub into the fork of a banksia tree. This fork was about seven feet from the ground and luckily about twenty-five feet away so that I was able to make good use of my binoculars.

The Noisy Scrub-bird remained there for at least three minutes and also gave three calls in that time. The tail was held erect and vibrated slightly before and during the calls. The head was thrown up and as it was first facing me, I could see the yellow gape, the inverted white "V" under the beak and the blackish triangular patch below it. When the bird turned sideways to me, I noted that the wings were rounded, did not reach to the base of the tail and had darker brown fine barring running across them.

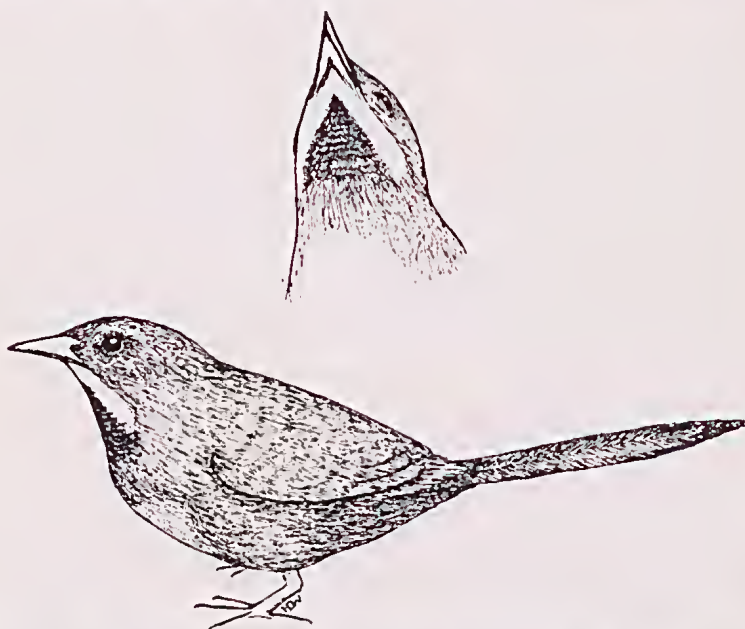


Fig 1.—The Noisy Scrub-bird, from field sketches by H. O. Webster.

The news of this reappearance of a bird thought to be almost certainly extinct was published in the *West Australian* newspaper on Christmas Day and on that morning I was very busy making tape recordings of its calls. Dr. D. L. Serventy was able to make the long journey down to Albany on December 28 and was delighted to confirm the identity of this remarkable bird, after seeing it a number of times and hearing its astonishing series of calls. The site has also been visited, and the bird seen and heard, by the following ornithologists: Dr. G. F. Mees, Messrs. C. Allen, J. R. Ford, J. B. Higham, C. F. H. Jenkins and D. W. Lamm. Mr. Allen recognised the notes we were listening to as calls he had heard in 1942 in this self-same swamp, where there has also been a regularly-tenanted holiday shack for many years. About 12 years ago a severe bushfire devastated the

swamp and killed the large trees in it. This evidence suggests that the site has been occupied by Scrub-birds for a long period, despite human interference and fires. If the habitat is maintained in its present form there is no reason why the species should not continue here indefinitely. The site would make a very convenient study area and a scientific tourist resort.



Fig 2.—Habitat of the Noisy Scrub-bird, Albany district.

I hope to continue observations and record its life history as fully as possible. The precise locality is not given for obvious reasons and it is hoped that the area will shortly become a bird sanctuary. The photograph shows part of its habitat and the field sketches, though not especially good, do give some idea of the throat markings and the tail. The bird is extremely difficult to photograph and much patient work will be needed to obtain a good portrait.

## MACRODERMA GIGAS SATURATA (CHIROPTERA, MEGADERMATIDAE)

### A NEW SUBSPECIES FROM THE KIMBERLEY DIVISION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By A. M. DOUGLAS, Western Australian Museum, Perth.

#### INTRODUCTION

Adult specimens of *Macroderma gigas* from the south-western part of the Kimberley Division (Derby), throughout the Pilbara district, to the Warburton Ranges in the south-east of Western Australia, have a predominantly white ventral surface and agree in all respects with the original description of *Macroderma gigas* (Dobson, 1880), which is based upon a single specimen collected at